

hungered and thirsted for something more satisfying than the sottish pleasures of the ale-house. The more sober-minded of the parishioners of Balsham in Cambridgeshire, or Strethill in Essex, for instance, assembled together to study the Bible and improve their morals instead of getting drunk and gambling away their earnings at cards and dice. Nothing was further from their minds than disobedience or disrespect to the queen. "For that heretofore we have at divers times spent and consumed our holidays vainly in drinking at the ale-house and playing at cards, tables, dice, and other vain pastimes, not meet for us and such of our calling and degree, for the which we have been often blamed of our parson, we thought it better to bestow the time in soberly and godly reading of the Scriptures, only for the purpose aforesaid and no other. We do not favour or maintain any of the opinions of the Anabaptists, Puritans, Papists, and Libertines/ but would be glad to learn our duty towards God, our prince, and magistrates, towards our neighbours and our families, in such sort as becomes good and faithful and obedient subjects, and it is our greatest and only desire to live, follow, and perform the\* same accordingly, as God shall give us grace."

To the legal and ecclesiastical mind this might be nonconformity ; it was certainly Christianity. And to check this kind of Christianity the legal mind drew up proclamations and devised penalties on the pretext that to worship otherwise than the law prescribed was equivalent to felony. Suspensions and imprisonments were accordingly multiplied, with the result that a large number of earnest-minded people, who would have been content to remain within the Church, were driven away from it. Had a reasonable liberty been accorded, dissent would probably not have split the Protestants into two bitterly antagonistic camps. The sticklers for uniformity and the sticklers for simplicity were driven asunder by the maladroit harshness which aggravated the spirit of resistance. Though Cartwright and his followers might remain within the pale of the Church in a state of chronic rebellion, the more resolute of the sectaries who followed Brown and Barrow shook the dust off their feet from a persecuting Church, and drew a considerable number of earnest-minded men and women along with them. The tendency to this kind of